

Post Canceled Precancels

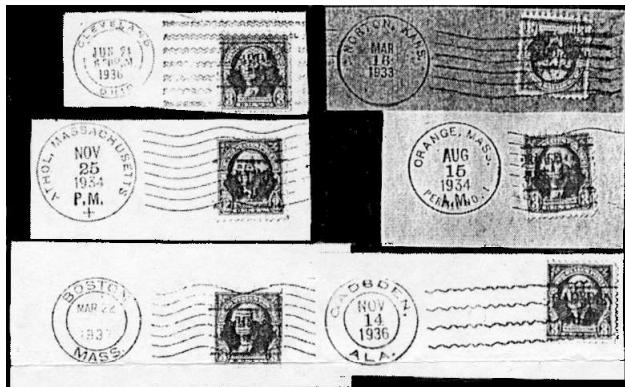
By Louis E Repeta (#1481)

The practice of precanceling postage stamps was started by the independent firm Hale & Company in 1844. Early precanceling was informally condoned by the Post Office Department.

Initially, no set standard for the manner or type of precancel overprint was prescribed. Therefore, examples of early classic precancels range from simple horizontal or vertical bars and lines (silent precancels) to unusual and fancy designs that incorporated the city of origin.

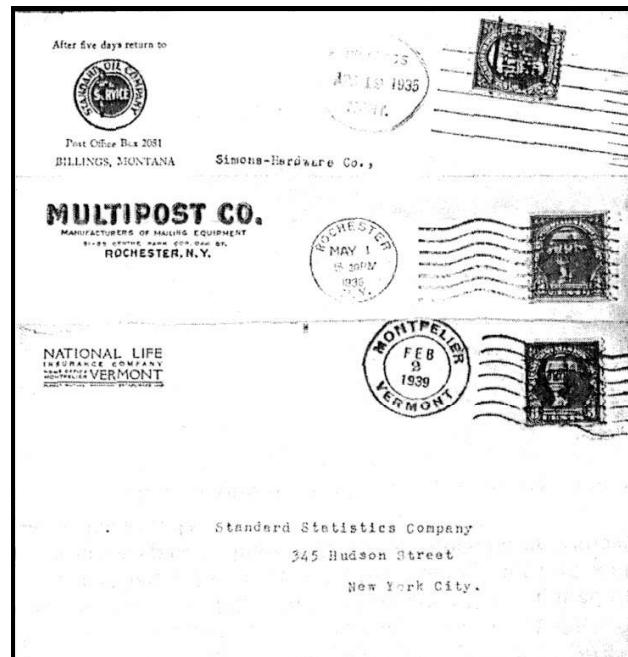
This wide range of designs may have prompted the Third Assistant Postmaster General, Edwin C. Madden, to issue a postal regulation in late May 1903 that required the precancel overprint to contain the name of the issuing city and state between two parallel lines. This configuration became known as the basic style.

Just what are precancels? Precanceled postage stamps can be defined as stamps that have been canceled, overprinted, prior to actual use in advance of mailing with an authorized device made specifically for that purpose. This piece of mail, received from a permit holder, does not require further cancellation, which facilitates the handling of mail. Most stamps are precanceled before being affixed to mail matter. There are legitimate instances when stamps have been precanceled after they have been affixed to mail matter but prior to mailing. For example, the Glen Allen, Virginia star frequently ties the stamp to the cover.



There are two situations that require precanceled stamps to be post-canceled:

- (1) mail that was to be returned as undeliverable, and
- (2) first-class mail matter.



Page 21 of the September 1924 *Supplement to the Postal Guide* carried a reminder to postmasters that "precanceled stamps affixed to return to sender or remailed material must be defaced". The returning post office was to cancel the precancels to prevent reuse by the original sender and afford proper protection of postal revenue. Examples of this practice are noted when a precancel of one post office bears a post-cancellation of another office. Most of these returned pieces of mail were used to update mailing lists and were then destroyed.

The use of precancels on first-class mail was originally authorized by the Third Assistant Postmaster, General W. Irving Glover. These regulations were published in the Postal Bulletin (No.13540) for Thursday, August 7, 1924. The type of application to be made for this special privilege and the necessary mailer's postmark were outlined. The user was to provide a dated post-canceling device similar in design to an official postmark and

apply it to the precanceled stamps. Much latitude was allowed in tile design of this canceler. Most often the private mailers' postmark will have a double date stamp dial with or without the permit

number and some type of bar killer. Examples exist struck with black, blue, green and red ink. A variety of private mailers' postmarks are shown on piece in Figure I above and on cover in Figure 2, to the left.
